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ABSTRACT

The diminishing status of Latin in the curriculum underscores the author's plea to Latin teachers to strive toward the implementation of nine suggestions concerning: (1) improved teaching, (2) professional cooperation, (3) institutes and workshops, (4) organizational support, (5) the Junior Classical League, (6) experiments and projects, (7) curriculum planning, (8) teacher shortage, and (9) professional attitudes. Three major reasons for including Latin in the curriculum are related to making the study relevant to the current epoch. Five forces which have worked against the growth of Latin and a rejection of the typical justification for study are presented. (RL)

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THE PLACE OF LATIN IN THE CURRICULUM*

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Recently one of my colleagues in the Psychology Department at the University of Idaho introduced himself with the inquiry, "In what department are you?" "Foreign Languages," I replied, "I'm the Latin teacher. He surprised me. Instead of the painfully embarrassing silence, the silence of withdrawal, which is the usual response to one's admission to being a Latin teacher, this man smiled. A twinkle appeared in his eye. "I had four years of Latin in high school," he chuckled, "and I only remember two or three things, but I do seem to remember that fruor, fungor, and utor always take the ablative case. Is that right?" I assured him that it was a pleasure to meet someone whose correct memory proved that he had been well taught. I was happy to know that he had gained something practical from his study of Latin.

It is this very practicality of Latin with which I am concerned today. It is a question which we must settle before we consider where Latin is to be placed on the various levels of curricular advancement. Why is Latin in the curriculum at all? What is its distinct purpose? What does Latin have to offer a boy or girl, man or woman, caught in the contemporary momentum of social revolution? Many of us are alarmed or disturbed by the drastic and seemingly incomprehensible changes which have been suddenly thrust upon us by no wish of our own. Classicists tend to be conservative, especially those of us who have lived through a major depression, a major war, and subsequent smaller wars. We are tired of crises. Somewhat bewildered, we wonder why we cannot sit peacefully at home and console ourselves with gerundives and other participial forms of amusement.

In reply to the above questions I shall begin with a personal anecdote. Twenty-one years ago I was contemplating graduate study. It was necessary to make a choice, for I was qualified by undergraduate preparation in both English and Latin. A French teacher, a friend of mine, made an astute observation. "Well, our Founding Fathers, the framers of the Constitution, were educated in the classical tradition. I doubt whether we have had as great a percentage of able men on the national scene since their time." Many times during the past twenty-one years I have quoted that statement to students. I hope that they have been as impressed by it as I was.

A second thought emerges from this quotation. Our Founding Fathers were themselves revolutionaries. They organized and carried through one of the most far-reaching revolutions of all history. Why, them, should we be so disturbed by the revolutionary tendencies which we see today? I believe there is a basic difference which must be resolved if the present upheaval is to develop into a healthy social movement. In the contemporary protests against social injustices one finds it difficult to identify any solution beyond anarchy, a complete denial of and objection to any form of authority. The instability of this philosophy proposes chaos. Our Founding Fathers, on the other hand, also used force to protest against social injustices, but even before the Revolution was well under way, a constructive document had already established a pattern of order, the Declaration of Independence; and the Constitution itself did not spring overnight into existence. There can be no doubt that the ancient Greek ideas of justice, individual self-reliance, responsibility, and concomitant freedom, the ancient Roman ideas of loyalty to the government because the government is the people, devotion to duty, and

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the idea of law and order, there can be no doubt that these ideas were woven carefully and deliberately into our basic documents of government because our Founding Fathers were familiar with them. They were men who had been educated in the classical tradition. If our young people today border on anarchy, we have ourselves to blame. For more than a generation we in professional education have ridden madly in all directions at once in pursuit of contradicting fads, fetishes, band wagons of no substance. In elementary and secondary education permissive discipline has assumed control under a guise of self-development, finding one's self, progressive education. In colleges and universities we have hidden behind walls of statistics, surveys piled on top of surveys, all in the name of research. On all levels, then, we have removed ourselves from the realities of our time, the permissive disciplinarian and the pedant in his ivory tower, both refuse to face the facts of life. We have cut ourselves off from the supporting anchor of the classical tradition. We are leaders who refuse to lead because we have lost our sense of direction. Is it any wonder that our people, homeless, helpless, rootless, wander from shallow creed to emptiness?

We need once more to sink our roots deep into a stable source of sustenance. In 1948, Professor Walter Agard of the University of Wisconsin emphasized that the chief value of classical education today is the fact that it will give roots to a mobile population. Tradition no longer has meaning in American life, even the good old family tradition. Everyone is on the move, on the way up, and young people today have no sense of belonging, no real attachment to the place of birth or the place of one's family. Therefore, we need, as never before, deep roots. These roots can be found in a classical education. Without such permanent guidelines confusion in our society will continue to multiply at a rapid rate, innocent, well-meaning people will continue to be used by the instigators of such confusion, whose ultimate aim is power for themselves, and the decline of representative government will be accelerated. I cite the whole course of Roman history, from the fall of the monarchy through the Republic, through the dictatorships to the Empire and its decline, as evidence that this can happen and is happening to us. Do you think riots and subversion are new? Cicero's orations against Catiline have proved otherwise to you. But what about riots provoked by poverty and intolerable living conditions? Read Suetonius' account in the Life of Claudius of the stoning of the Emperor Claudius in the Forum, or Tacitus' account in his Annals of the wretched housing in Rome prior to the great fire of Nero's reign. Do we have race tensions? Read Juvenal's Third Satire, in which he strongly laments the influx into Rome of the Greeks and Orientals. Do we have violence in our big cities? urban poverty? Read on through the Third Satire about the dangers of walking the streets of Rome by night or about the impossibility of sleep in the crowded slums of Rome. Do our rich get richer and our poor get poorer and has so-called education become our gateway to the success of riches and nothing else? Read Trimalchio's dinner in Petronius' Satyricon and you will recognize the nouveaux riches of America.

I cannot teach Latin without a sense of history, without the perspective of historical depth, both in the development of the language and in the development of historical events. I am asking you that you go and do likewise. Latin must be made relevant to our own time. Every significant quotation from every Latin author echoes with that relevance.

I have now cited three reasons for the study of Latin. We need to know and appreciate the foundations of our own social and economic structure. We need deep roots in order to survive, and we need to develop a sense of historical perspective relevant to our own times.

We have evaded the obvious reason for the existence of Latin in the curriculum. It is there as a remnant from the centuries when it served as the basic language of communication among European scholars and it served well until relatively recent times. It was only natural for the rough, untutored American in his westward migration to want for his children the things he had never been able to possess for himself. Therefore, success was equated with money and money with education. But this education must be education for all, even though the European curriculum which we had borrowed was the curriculum of the scholar. I have already argued that this curriculum was effectively appropriate to the leaders of colonial America. I believe that it is effectively appropriate to the needs of our leaders today, but it will not be so unless we deliberately direct our teaching to this end. We must make Latin relevant to life as we live it today.

The reasons which I have presented for a strong Latin program in the contemporary curriculum presume the study of Latin literature. They presume also knowledge and understanding of the ancient Roman culture through that literature. It is our responsibility as teachers to gain that knowledge and understanding, for the most effective teaching comes through contagious enthusiasm for one's subject.

We have also evaded the usual, popular reasons for the study of Latin; the things we have been taught to say to our students: Latin helps enlarge your English vocabulary, Latin helps your English grammar, Latin helps you understand mythological allusions in English literature, Latin is useful in the transfer-of-training in learning procedure, Latin is a good basic language for the study of other foreign languages, and so on. A long list of these reasons, valid to us, was compiled after three years of surveys, research, and study in the United States and Europe and published by the Classical Investigation in 1924. Since 1924, The Report of Classical Investigation has been the Bible for Latin and Greek teachers. The purposes of our existence and the methods for putting these purposes into effect have been drawn from that document. Nevertheless, Latin enrollments in our public schools have continued to decline, in spite of temporary periods of increase in individual school systems. Five forces, not always opposing forces, have worked against us: progressive education and the educationists in the 1930's and 40's, modern languages, Latin teachers themselves, guidance counselors, and time. I need not belabor the damaging effects of the progressive educationists. We are doubtless all aware that they opposed the teaching of <u>any</u> foreign language in the curriculum. This opposition was vociferous and strong, most influential among parents, for was it not based on the solid American frontier idea that the schoolroom must be oriented toward a means of livelihood? Success is money; if it doesn't help you to make money, it's no good. If you must take a foreign language, take one you can use. One by one these educationists destroyed by persuasive arguments the various reasons for Latin in the curriculum as set forth by the Classical Investigation of 1924. It is interesting to note that when large sums of money were forthcoming from the Federal Government for the improvement of the teaching of <u>modern</u> foreign languages, under Title III of the NDEA, principals and superintendents who had been indifferent or openly hostile suddenly found themselves in the vanguard of proponents for foreign languages. Within a short time after the enactment of Title III, enrollments in modern foreign languages surged ahead and enrollments in Latin rapidly declined. They are still declining. One heard complaints from high school Latin teachers that the best students were now being guided into a modern language. The Latin teachers themselves are primarily to blame for this; the modern language teachers are to be commended.

As late as 1950-1951, the modern language teachers were in a state of despair equal to any dejection experienced by teachers of Latin. Gloom prevailed at many modern foreign language meetings. But these teachers decided to take positive action; Latin teachers were unable to agree on any course of action. There were many leaders but few followers. Representatives from modern languages met, worked together for mutual benefit, drew up an organized plan of purposes and principles, and when the Federal Government expressed an interest in aid to education, the Modern Foreign Language Association was ready with a worthwhile proposal. We in Latin had nothing ready.

As soon as modern language teachers became aware of the decline and possible demise of Latin, they rallied to defend and support it. Again their defense took positive action. In April, 1956, at the Airlie House Conference, Washington, D.C., where fifty Latin teachers from all levels were assembled by a federal grant to plan strategy for saving Latin in the curriculum, the modern language representatives offered wise counseling and sound advice. The most notable representative was the former Executive Secretary of the Modern Language Association, William Riley Parker, whose article, "The Case for Latin," published both by the PMLA and The Classical Journal, October, 1964, had already won wide acclaim.

It was evident that modern language teachers were genuinely concerned about Latin, even though guidance counselors were not. But guidance counselors are products of schools of education, and the attitude of the educationists has already been discussed. Del Reiff, a guidance counselor and Latin teacher in Coachella Valley High School, California, in The Classical Journal in April, 1965, pointed out that his colleagues in guidance are prone to laugh at him. They have been exposed too long to too many Latin teachers who day after day put students through a monotonous repetition of declining, conjugating, and puzzle-solving type of translating. We must confess that our cause has been harmed by this type of unimaginative teaching. But, says Mr. Reiff, guidance counselors and principals will listen if you show them concrete statistical evidence based on valid research and experimentation that Latin does improve a student's achievement. They will listen, for example, to the experiment conducted by Glenn Nimnicht and others as reported in The Classical Journal in November, 1961, where selected control groups proved that the work of those students who had studied Latin was significantly superior in English to the work of non-Latin students. They will listen when a Latin teacher makes Latin relevant to life in our time, when she presents the subject with enthusiasm and with creative imagination.

But time is against us. In 1956, a committee of the American Philological Association reported that within fifteen years we would lose 40% of our Latin teaching staff by death or retirement. Unless we replace these losses by young, exciting teachers, Latin will go the way of Greek in the latter part of the last century.

Today I have, I hope, justified the place of Latin in the curriculum; I have given you the problems which we have in keeping it there. One question remains: how are we going to meet these problems? I now offer a number of suggestions. I shall make them brief in order not to cloud your memory with the details of ramification.

1. We must strive to make good teaching better. We must dedicate ourselves to something beyond the technique of "take the next five pages and don't bother me with questions." Good teaching is composed of four basic elements: a) knowledge of one's subject; b) contagious enthusiasm; c) creative imagination; and d) common sense. On these we must build.

2. We must learn to work together, to exchange ideas, to work for one another, to build with our colleagues, especially those colleagues in modern languages, to avoid petty jealousies and petty gossip, to dedicate ourselves to such cooperative effort that we gain and keep the respect of all who observe us.

3. We must seek professional improvement through enrollment in institutes, workshops, correspondence courses, but first and best of all, through individual reading at home. This involves continuous reading of Latin and Greek authors, as well as the reading of professional periodicals.

4. We must support our state, regional, and national organizations through contributions of time and money. These include the organization which is meeting here today, the Classical Association of the Pacific States, the American Council of the Teachers of Foreign Languages, the American Classical League and its affiliate, the Junior Classical League. Two years ago the American Classical League established a national office in Washington with John Latimer as Executive Secretary. Professor Latimer planned, with the aid of federal funds, two significant conferences: The Airlie House Conference, 1965, to identify the problems facing classical education, and the Oxford (Ohio) Conference in 1967, to organize an attack upon these problems.

5. In many states great gains in Latin enrollment have been attributed to the Junior Classical League. I recommend that you sponsor a chapter in your school.

6. We must conduct experiments and projects which illustrate to principals, guidance counselors and the general public, the value of Latin. These experiments must be given fair and adequate publicity.

7. Between 1964-65 and 1965-66, Latin enrollments in grades seven and eight rose from 19,000 to 35,000. We should give fair consideration to the feasibility of offering Latin, wherever possible, in grades seven and eight.

8. We still find a great shortage of secondary school and college Latin and Greek teachers, especially in the face of a renaissance of interest in classics on college campuses. We need to recruit these teachers among our students. Professor Lillian Berry of Indiana University used to say to each high school Latin teacher, "Send me one Latin student each year." I now make this plea to you.

9. "Be not weary in well-doing, for in due season you shall reap."

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*(Presented at the Idaho Foreign Language Teachers' Conference at Boise College on October 11, 1968 and printed with the permission of Dr. Lashbrook.)